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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PORT AU PRINCE 000577

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/18/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [HA](#)

SUBJECT: HAITI LOOKS FOR NEW PRIME MINISTER

Classified By: Ambassador Janet Sanderson. Reason: E.O. 12958 1.4 (b), (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) President Preval is following the constitutional process and consulting with the Presidents of both chambers of parliament and with political parties, to choose a new Prime Minister and cabinet. Multiple embassy sources agree that the new PM must stand above the parties, and be a political uniter. He (or she) must also be able to address the urgent social-economic problems affecting Haiti as well as forge a more effective working relationship with the parliament. This government must be more inclusive than the outgoing one (Fanmi Lavalas will probably obtain at least one cabinet ministry) and also more cohesive. We hope the government will be more accountable and include ministers who are more competent. Sources agree the government must be approved by the parliament before the May 8 (at the latest) expiration of the terms of the ten two-year Senators, which will change the complexion -- and possibly the viability -- of that body. The President could nominate a PM as early as the week of April 21. End summary.

Process Underway

¶2. (U) Following the April 12 vote of no confidence in Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis, the process of choosing a successor is already well underway. The 1987 constitution lays down the process. When a Prime Minister loses a vote of no-confidence, he submits his resignation to the President. Outgoing PM Alexis did so on April 15. The President must choose a PM from the party with a majority in parliament. If there is no such majority, as is currently the case, the President names a successor in consultation with the Presidents of both houses of Parliament. The PM-designate then chooses his cabinet and presents it to parliament along with a formal explanation of the government's program. Both houses of parliament vote the government up or down. If the government loses, the process begins anew, either with the PM selecting a new cabinet, or the President selecting a new PM who in turn selects a new cabinet.

Outreach All Over the Place

¶13. (SBU) It has been a hallmark of Preval's governing style to reach out to political parties and civil society when making high-level political appointments. Naming a PM has been no exception. Preval began consulting with political party leaders at least as early as April 15. Leaders from "Fusion", OPL, Lespwa and Fanmi Lavalas told us during the week of April 14 that they hoped the President would choose a president not tightly linked to a political party, possibly a pure technocrat. That person would have to have strong leadership qualities, a vision of how to address the country's economic and social difficulties, the ability to communicate that vision to the people, the skills to work effectively with parliament, and above all, the ability to gather diverse parties into a real coalition government that acts in unity. All said the government should be broadly-based and more inclusive than its predecessor.

¶14. (SBU) The President consulted with the Senate President Kely Bastien and Chamber of Deputies President Pierre Eric Jean Jacques on April 17. Bastien told the press April 18 that there had been no agreement on a name, but that the candidate should be a strong, non-partisan person with strong leadership qualities. "Fusion" spokesman Micha Gaillard and OPL Chairman Edgar Leblanc Embassy officers April 18 that they concluded after their parties' meeting with President Preval the previous day that Preval would give them the name of a PM nominee before April 23.

¶15. (SBU) The list of qualities needed in a PM is a tall order for Haiti's political class. Under an awkward constitutional arrangement that splits executive power between the PM and

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President, the new PM's most elementary job requirement, which all recognize but no one mentions, will be the ability to work with President Preval. Preval kept PM Alexis on a short leash, and often worked around him in micro-managing ministries. Many ministers answered directly to Preval rather than to the PM. Preval wants a PM who has no higher political ambitions, a factor that made him distrust Alexis.

A Looming Deadline

¶16. (SBU) The PM search process carries great urgency, since President Preval will want to have the government named and approved by Parliament before the terms of the ten two-years senators expire, which will happen either May 8 (exactly two years after they were sworn in) or when the parliament passes the electoral law, whichever comes earlier. With these Senators' departures, the upper house will be left with 12 vacancies (the ten two-year senators, one vacancy left by the death of a Senator over a year ago, and the vacant seat of Senator Rudy Boulos, expelled from the Senate last month for having dual nationality). The rump Senate may have difficulty achieving a quorum, and may be less amenable to the new government. After elections to replace the two-year Senators are held later this year, the new Senate could make the new government a short-lived one.

A Place at the Table for Lavalas?

¶17. (C) A key factor to watch in the formation of a new government will be whether the pro-Aristide party Fanmi Lavalas (FL) is included. FL has no ministers in the outgoing government. Some leaders such as FL Senator Rudy Heriveaux have complained that FL has been increasingly excluded from high-level policy. Embassy believes Fanmi Lavalas elements orchestrated at least some of the more violent demonstrations last week. There is no doubt that Fanmi Lavalas wants to generate political leverage from the

recent disturbances to obtain seats in the cabinet.

'Fusion' spokesman Micha Gaillard told PolCouns April 18 that the President has already agreed to give FL one seat in the cabinet, and that this would be a good thing, in that it would force that party to shoulder political responsibility. Preval told Ambassador, however, that he would not talk to FL, so how he fineses this remains to be seen.

Possible Candidates

18. (SBU) Embassy has heard numerous names bruited for the top government position. Virtually none of them meet all the criteria discussed above. In roughly descending order of credibility, they are:

-- Jean Max Bellrive, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation. He is close to former PM Marc Bazin, a member of Bazin's small party (Movement for the Establishment of Democracy) and a former consultant to the UNDP. He was also supported by Fanmi Lavalas in 2006 for inclusion in the Alexis government, in the absence of a pure FL candidate. He worked for Aristide and Aristide's Prime Minister Yvon Neptune. Embassy has close working relationship with him, but he may run into problems with those who want a clean break with the past.

-- Joanes Gue, Secretary of State in the Ministry of Agriculture. Gue has strong technical credentials in agriculture, precisely the area where the new government will have to devote strong efforts. Preval sometimes has let him chair cabinet meetings in the presence of then-PM Alexis. He made a strong presentation at the President's April 12 press conference that announced subsidies on rice and fertilizer. Gue was dispatched to Venezuela April 15 to negotiate the purchase of either fertilizer or urea, a fertilizer ingredient.

-- Eriq Pierre, adviser in the Executive Bureau for Haiti and
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Argentina at the World Bank in Washington, D.C. A personal friend of Preval, Pierre was then-President Preval's first candidate for PM in 1997, but was not approved by parliament. He also helped Preval in the President's 1999 effort to dissolve Parliament.

-- Jacky Lumarque, Rector of Quisqueya University, and Coordinator of the President's Working Group on Education, tasked with preparing a proposal for overhauling Haiti's education system. He is personally close to Preval and was reportedly the go-between for Alexis' appointment as PM in 2006

-- Fritz Longchamp, President Preval's Chief of Staff. A former Foreign Minister, Ambassador to Washington, and Haiti's UN Permrep, Longchamp would fulfill better than most the requirement of being able to work with Preval, but his domestic policy credentials are weak. Furthermore, he was clearly frustrated by Preval's inertia during the violent events of last week.

-- Michele Pierre Louis, a respected intellectual and head of FOKAL, a Haitian NGO funded by the Open Society Institute that builds civil society organizations, runs education programs and libraries in poor communities, and administers programs targeting children in distressed neighborhoods. She is a former business partner of President Preval, but deemed 'too independent' for him.

-- Paul Denis, advisor in the office of the President, former Senator who until late 2007 was spokesman for OPL, presidential candidate 2005-06. He was also a spokesman for the Democratic Convergence coalition, which gives him added anti-Aristide credentials. Observers believe he may well be handicapped by having signed on as Preval's adviser in

January.

-- Kely Bastien, Lespwa, currently President of the Senate.

-- Daniel Supplice, a minister under Jean Claude Duvalier, said to be eager for the job but too anti-Lavalas.

-- Marc Bazin, former minister and Prime Minister.

-- Leslie Voltaire, a founding member of Famni Lavalas, currently a consultant in the Ministry of Tourism. Currently a FL moderate, he was Aristide's chief of staff during his Washington exile and immediately after his 1994 return to Haiti. Some argue that such an appointment would help reinforce divisions in FL and neutralize the more radical wing of this party.

-- Jean Moliere, Fanmi Lavalas Minister of the Interior under Aristide's second presidency.

-- Paul Gustave Magloire, Minister of Interior under Interim PM Gerard Latortue.

-- Pierre Eric Jean Jacques, President of the Chamber of Deputies. Most contacts agree this would be an extremely poor choice, since Jean Jacques lacks basic competence as a legislative leader.

¶ 9. (SBU) Embassy notes President Preval's contrariness, his reluctance to take advice, and his penchant for showing off his independence. He could name a candidate completely out of the blue.

SANDERSON